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# STREET SHEET

## IN MEMORY OF RUTH PLEANER & ANNE KAPLAN

### MOVE ALONG TO (NO)WHERE

When the Coalition on Homelessness has visited sites at risk of or undergoing resolution, the refrain from folks living in them has been receiving no warning from City workers or no services offered to them.

Couper Orona, a disabled former firefighter from Sacramento who has camped outside on San Francisco streets for two and a half years, joins that chorus. She has firsthand experience with the ordered decampings. She receives “move along” orders at least twice a day from civilians and several times a week by police.

“The sweeps are cruel and a little heartless,” she said. “It has broken, and can break, people into a weak state.”

In the last six months, the cops told Orona to vacate five times, more often than not with previous official notice. In those situations, she reminded police that posting notices is part of proper procedure. Also, she wasn’t offered to relocate to a Navigation Center, or any other services. At her most recent relocation, she said that police were gruff with her and exuded “a tough guy attitude.” It was on Division, near Brannan and Potrero.

“The cops said, ‘you can’t be here,’” Orona said in recollection. “Well, where I do gotta go?”

She moved to the other side of the street for three weeks. Fortunately, that gave her encampment neighbors enough time to get into a Navigation Center.

Orona is not alone in criticizing police involvement in the resolutions. In a recent interview with the San Francisco Public Press, an unnamed former outreach worker recently said that the cops’ presence undermines trust built with camp residents.

“We may be seen with (police), but we don’t want to work with them,” the former outreach worker said.

When police and Public Works descended upon a camp outside a Best Buy on Division in the last week of September, Orona sent a text: “They finally made me lose it.” The message went to Supervisors Jane Kim and Hillary Ronen, as well as the Coalition on Homelessness.

Kim and Ronen, who represent the areas with the encampments, came to the area, she said.

In their daily lives, “they don’t see or smell it or be a part of it, seeing people’s stuff thrown in the truck,” Orona said. “That day, they got to see it.” ■

## NO RESOLUTION FOR SF'S TENT ENCAMPMENTS



TJ JOHNSTON

After months of undertaking, all of the encampments in San Francisco’s Mission District have been “resolved” — in other words, moved off the sidewalks. Or at least that’s what Street Sheet learned from recently acquired documents by the city’s Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing.

Yet it’s clear from simple observation that new encampments temporarily sprout in previously resolved areas, prompting visits from “re-encampment prevention teams.” These teams are composed of SF Homeless Outreach Team and Department of Public Works staff, but local cops are also included, lending the appearance of a police action in camp visits. The City assigns these teams despite the shortage of available shelter space and below-market rate housing that could accommodate some 7,500 San Franciscans.

In response to a public records request from *Street Sheet*, which the Coalition on Homelessness publishes, the Homelessness Department sent updates from its encampment working group dating from June 2017. Weekly agendas chart the progress of camp resolutions: an August 9 memo stated that 87 percent of the Mission’s encampments from Division Street to Cesar Chavez Street had been resolved, and by the September 20 meeting, resolution in the Mission reached 100 percent.

“Resolution” is the City’s term of art describing the relocation of people living in temporary structures, such as tents. When the city resolves an encampment, they offer places for folks to go — such as a Navigation Center. This is different

from a “sweep” where folks are just forced to move, usually across the street, and often have property confiscated in the process.

The Police Department oversees and enforces these operations, with officers mandating a move-along from the premises. At the same time, the Department of Public Works is on hand to power-wash the area and dispose of debris, which usually consists homeless people’s belongings. The city gives two weeks notice to allow time to work with residents to find placements.

In theory, the Homelessness Department sends workers from its Encampment Resolution Teams to help place campers in transitional settings. The department maintains that resolution efforts were meant to enable encampment residents to enter the neighborhood’s recently opened Navigation Center on 1515 South Van Ness Ave. Deputy director Sam Dodge said at last month’s meeting of the Local Homelessness Coordinating Board that 45 encampment people were placed in the center as of August 31.

But where do other campers who aren’t placed go? That is unclear, especially to them.

Soon-to-be-displaced residents told “sweeps watchers” led by the Coalition on Homelessness that City workers engaged in sweeps offered no services. They also mentioned the lack of notice given; instead of advanced notice, City workers — police, in particular — ordered them to clear out immediately.

While it’s not apparent where now-unsheltered campers could go, what is more evident, based on agendas from meet-

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THE U.S. INTERAGENCY COUNCIL INTERVIEWED SAN FRANCISCO'S DEPARTMENT OF HOMELESSNESS ABOUT TENT ENCAMPMENTS. HERE ARE SOME QUOTES FROM THE AUGUST 2017 REPORT.

**WHO WERE THE MOST IMPORTANT STAKEHOLDERS TO HAVE AT THE TABLE?**

"HSH [Dept. of Homelessness & Supportive Services] holds community meetings with surrounding neighbors and businesses, both leading up to and after resolution of an encampment. These meetings serve to provide information about the process and timeline for resolving an encampment, but also to help neighbors develop a plan to prevent re-encampment."

**WHAT STRATEGIES WERE EMPLOYED TO PREVENT RE-ENCAMPMENT?**

"Strategies to prevent re-encampment have included trimming trees or bushes, improving lighting in areas where encampments tend to form, ensuring regular police patrols, or hiring private security, among others."

Perhaps what is most concerning about these quotes is a lack of acknowledgement that encampment residents, too, are stakeholders in the community. Furthermore, the strategies employed to prevent re-encampment lacked any services or support for homeless people—rather, they were punitive measures like police and private security.



Three specific encampments that the Encampment Resolution Team have noted at Vermont between 15th and 17th streets, Stevenson and 12th streets, and 17th and Vermont and San Bruno Avenue.

ings of the Encampment Working Group, is that re-encampment teams include cops paying visits to ERT-resolved areas. The Homelessness Department-led working group and the re-encampment preventers share three other agencies in their ranks: Public Health, Public Works and the police. Also, the meeting notes say that the re-encampment teams report new people living on these streets.

The department's Encampment Resolution Team noted the resolution of three specific encampments: One on Vermont Street, between 15th and 17th streets, housed 47 people in 40 tents. Another on Stevenson and 12th streets, by the Navigation Center at the Civic Center Hotel, is estimated to have 17 folks in up to 12 tents. The third, bordered by 17th and Vermont streets and San Bruno Avenue, and located near Showplace Square West, is also reported having 17 residents in up to 12 tents.

Throughout the summer, police and Public Works dispatched teams of workers to the freeway-adjacent areas of the neighborhood, particularly along Brannan and Division streets, and Potrero Avenue.

But according to the encampment working group, the city had to send its Re-Encampment Team to the Vermont Street stretch, where two makeshift structures and four RV campers re-emerged where the 40-tent site was resolved earlier this summer.

That team also found the San Bruno street area that includes Showplace Square to be repopulated with two- and three-per-

son camps—not to mention at least 20 bicycles.

Records indicate that other resolutions are pending in the nearby Mission Bay neighborhood. High on that list is a piece of city-owned property between King and Berry streets; that patch is where recent camp dwellers moved from Seventh and 16th streets. Also, city agencies are eyeing a site on Berry and DeHaro streets.

Near California College of the Arts, the City performed an impromptu removal of a tent site after a fire on September 13 consumed two Box City houselets that were funded by the Saint Francis Homelessness Challenge. A number of tents close to the units were also dismantled. That operation involved heavy equipment, including compactors and front loaders.

Reading the bureaucratic language in the encampment working group's weekly agendas, one is struck by how homeless constituents aren't mentioned. Percentages of resolved Mission blocks are updated each week. Encamped streets are enumerated with numbers, structures and even RVs. A September 20 agenda notes a "section 169 summary," referring to the local sidewalk sit-lie ban.

There are no numbers of people housed after years of being unhoused.

Wouldn't those figures be fitting on a workgroup plan with a letterhead from the Department of Homelessness and Supportive Housing? ■

## CRUEL CHOP SHOP LEGISLATION SLATED FOR FULL BOARD VOTE

The Coalition on Homelessness is opposed to proposed amended legislation by District 8 Supervisor Jeff Sheehy, entitled "Bicycle Chop Shops." Proposed in February, the ordinance was passed out of the Land Use and Transportation Committee and is scheduled for a full vote on October 3rd. This is an ordinance that would amend the Public Works code to prohibit the taking apart or rebuilding of bikes, possessing bike parts, or selling bike parts in public sidewalks, and allows for notice of violation, impound fees, and the seizure of those parts. While Sheehy claims that the legislation intends to reduce bike theft, the Coalition does not believe that it will do this at all, and only target poor and homeless people with bike parts in the public. The new amended version of this legislation, reviewed in late September, is not a significant improvement.

We are deeply disturbed by this legislation, because while attempting to address the very troubling issue of bicycle theft, it instead panders to the prejudicial premise that all those who live outdoors and own multiple bikes and/or parts must have stolen that property, while failing to reduce bike theft. Much like stop and frisk—it assumes guilt without cause—and relies on profiling.

We believe the real impetus of this legislation is optic frustration with tents, and related bike parts which represent an all too harsh symbol of abject poverty.

The reality is that recycling bike parts is one of the few alternative economic venues for impoverished people to make a living. Destitute people receive donated bike parts, find parts in dumpsters and various locations, trade parts and are able to use their bike skills to repair bikes, build bikes and sell them for life sustaining income. They often don't have means to sell their wares on places like Craig's List. Of course, some unhoused people engage in theft, as do some housed community members, but most of this economy is honest recycling. This legislation assumes that if you are unhoused and engaging in this element of the economy, you are presumed guilty of theft.

Similarly many avid housed and unhoused bicyclists own multiple bicycles that can be used for varying leisure and practical purposes. Avid cyclists collect accessories to decorate and improve their property. This ordinance allows the confiscation of property simply because the individual is both homeless (forced by destitution into "open air"), and has either five or more bicycle parts, five or more bicycles, three bikes with missing parts, or one frame with cut cables. We believe this ordinance will violate unhoused people's property rights, simply because they are destitute.

California law presumes that a person who possesses an item is its rightful owner. This proposed legislation categorically authorizes the Department of Public Works (DPW) to impound property without probable cause that bike items are stolen. There is case law to this extent, and we believe this ordinance violates the 4th Amendment under *People v. Williams*, 145 Cal. App. 4th 756, 762 (2006) and *Miranda v. City of Cornelius*, 429 F.3d 858 (9th Cir. 2005). Penal Code 836.5(e) authorizes arrests, not seizures of property; the legal basis for this is not clear. DPW is not equipped to decide if one of the exceptions ap-

plies, and what the appropriate action is.

This legislation would result in the frequent confiscation of property from rightful owners, simply because they are destitute and therefore presumed to be thieves. In a truly Orwellian twist, the only way homeless rightful owners could get their property back is to either prove that they did not have multiple bike parts outdoors or to pay an impound fee, while housed people could prove ownership and have their impound fees waived. There is no means in this legislation for homeless people to prove ownership to avoid confiscation, or to get rightful property back for free.

(d) A person who has received a notice of violation may retrieve the seized items 30 days after the date of the notice, upon payment of an impound fee equal to the actual cost to Public Works of removal and storage. After 30 days have elapsed, if the recipient of the notice has not yet requested to retrieve the items, and another person requests the items on the basis of their lawful ownership of the items and provides Public Works reliable supporting evidence for their claim of ownership (including, but not limited to, video or photographic evidence, a bill of sale, the correct serial number) that Public Works finds accurate, then Public Works shall return the items to that person at no charge.

The hearing process must be requested in writing and there is no means for homeless individuals to find out when the hearing date is, all of which is very difficult for unhoused individuals to navigate. Homeless people often suffer from disabilities, including mental health issues, that impact their functioning, and would make it an unfair hardship. The hearing itself is not measuring rightful ownership but of Section 5101 or whether they violated the policy of prohibiting the taking apart or rebuilding of bikes, having bike parts, or selling bike parts in public sidewalks or rightways. It is not a determination of ownership.

"If the hearing officer concludes that the City failed to prove by clear and convincing evidence that the violation of Section 5101 described in the notice occurred, Public Works shall immediately rescind the notice and return any seized items at no charge."

The legislation conflicts with current DPW property policy as developed by Lawyer's Committee on Civil Rights, the ACLU and the City Attorney. DPW property policy states that DPW shall not confiscate property that is claimed, and unclaimed property must be bagged and tagged, and retrieved for free. In that policy, the notice must be given before property is confiscated, not at the same time. The storage time also conflicts, which should be 90, not 60 days.

There are many areas of this legislation that reveal its prejudicial nature. It targets only "open air" markets, as opposed to the exact same activity by a housed person, who is exempt. It refers to right of ways, but exempts housed people from the same law if items are sold on their own property.

In sum, the Coalition on Homelessness strongly opposes this legislation. We are concerned about bike theft, but do not believe this legislation deters theft. We feel it only punishes indigent people for daring to scrape out a living in this city and paints a powerful image of the destitute worker as thief, without ever bothering to prove their guilt. ■

# COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS

The STREET SHEET is a project of the Coalition on Homelessness. The Coalition on Homelessness organizes poor and homeless people to create permanent solutions to poverty while protecting the civil and human rights of those forced to remain on the streets.

Our organizing is based on extensive peer outreach, and the information gathered directly drives the Coalition's work. We do not bring our agenda to poor and homeless people: They bring their agenda to us. We then turn that agenda into powerful campaigns that are fleshed out at our work group meetings, where homeless people come together with their other community allies to win housing and human rights for all homeless and poor people.

## WORKGROUP MEETINGS

AT 468 TURK STREET

**HOUSING JUSTICE WORK GROUP** Every Tuesday at noon

The Housing Justice Workgroup is working toward a San Francisco in which every human being can have and maintain decent, habitable, safe, and secure housing. This meeting is in English and Spanish and open to everyone!

**HUMAN RIGHTS WORK GROUP** Every Wednesday at 12:30 p.m.

The Human Rights Workgroup has been doing some serious heavy lifting on these issues: conducting direct research, outreach to people on the streets, running multiple campaigns, developing policy, staging direct actions, capturing media attention, and so much more. All those down for the cause are welcome to join!

To learn more about COH workgroup meetings, contact us at: 415-346-3740, or go at: [www.cohsf.org](http://www.cohsf.org)

## STREET SHEET STAFF

The Street Sheet is a publication of the Coalition on Homelessness. Some stories are collectively written, and some stories have individual authors. But whoever sets fingers to keyboard, all stories are formed by the collective work of dozens of volunteers, and our outreach to hundreds of homeless people.

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## REMEMBERING RUTH, LONGTIME COALITION MEMBER

JENNIFER FRIEDENBACH

In the struggle, there are often hard working dedicated folks working behind the scenes that are essential to moving issues forward, and they are often women. Longtime Coalition on Homelessness family member Ruth Pleiner was one of those. She passed away this past month and left our community with a gaping hole.

The Coalition on Homelessness is a very grassroots, rough and tumble organization. It was started by a group of homeless folks and frontline service providers 30 years ago, and operates for and by homeless people themselves. Our mission is to end homelessness and halt human rights abuses, while ensuring homeless people are at the forefront of the struggle. Especially in the early days, the office was smoke-filled, dirty-carpeted and boisterous, and folks from all walks of life frequented it. The open-door space welcomed all destitute people into the struggle to end homelessness. People who are constantly dehumanized, mistrusted and vilified. People severely stigmatized and traumatized. The original office was a converted storage closet located at the bottom floor of the Tenderloin Housing Clinic. Ruth started at the Coalition in the early days of the organization and was the organization's first bookkeeper. According to founder Paul Boden, she had only one surprising condition—that she be able to bring her child to work with her. That openness on her part instantly relaxed the space as she trusted the same people with her most precious baby. Her first child, Max, and second child, Eli, were embraced and adored by the Tenderloin community, as children often are, especially in impoverished communities. However, Ruth didn't come from an impoverished background, and as a white, upper-middle class woman, that unspoken trust she had of the many homeless people who shared space, cared for and played with her child spoke volumes about who she was and instantly transmitted value to those around her. It was transformative. Following Ruth, many parents followed suit and brought their own babies and children to work at the Coalition. We call them Coalition kids, and many are still friends with each other today.

Ruth was quiet, funny, kind and committed. She centered the organization with her calm strength. She also had a deep sense of justice. The Coalition has equal salaries for all staff, an important value in the organization that continues to this day. That egalitarian policy was started by Ruth. She was earning a higher salary than everyone else and suggested her work was no more valuable than the next person. Over the years, staff at the Coalition were frequently laid off during funding shortages, and Ruth would continue working without pay. She stayed with the organization for about 15 years, reducing her hours when her children needed her more, and often working as a volunteer. She did so thanklessly and without glory, operating simply from a place of commitment to struggle.

When Ruth was ready to leave, she spent a great deal of time training her predecessor on how to do the work. Later, when founder Paul Boden left the organization to start the Western Regional Advocacy Project, an organization that works to unite homeless organizations across the West Coast to halt human rights abuses and create solutions, Ruth offered her skills to start that organization. In both organizations, Ruth set up accountable bookkeeping systems to ensure the organizational funds were accounted for, bills got paid, personnel records were kept and all the other things critical to running a non-profit. That allowed the rest of the staff to focus on organizing other homeless people to campaign for the city to afford them the very same dignity Ruth carried with her daily.

Ruth, we love you and miss you.

### THE SNOW FLAKE BY RUTH FREEMAN

When snow falls  
In early Spring  
Just when the trees  
Are greening  
I stand in awesome fear  
Wondering at its meaning

When snow falls  
In early Spring  
And buds begin to show  
I wonder if they will survive  
In all this cold and snow

Suddenly I see  
A bit of sunshine  
Melting snow flakes  
Oh, the miracle of Nature  
And its beauty and its powers!

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STREET



Founder of the Coalition on Homelessness, Paul Boden, and Ruth.

### THE BEAUTY OF A FLOWER BY R. SMITH

The beauty of a flower can be seen in many things, but you cannot see them with eyes of the flesh. They can only be seen with eyes of the spirit. It may be that you will see them in the old beggar standing on the corner begging for change. Or maybe you might see them in the eyes of the prostitute not wanting to do the things she is doing or maybe you will see them in the smile that someone gives you as they pass you by. Maybe you will see them in the blind man trying to find his way or the crippled man trying to get to his place. So you see, the beauty of a flower can be seen in many things, if only you took the time to look close enough.

### DON'T PUNISH ME BY R. SMITH.

Don't punish me for being homeless and poor  
Isn't being homeless and poor  
Punishment enough

## CHARLENE: I SLEPT AND SHOWERED AT FACEBOOK. I WAS HOMELESS. AND PREGNANT.

From the genuinity of my smile, you would never assume I was homeless. At work I'm constantly laughing, talking, and goofing off as if nothing was wrong. But at the end of the day, once the sun sets and everyone disperses to their warm, comfy, homes, I had nowhere to go.

I have never truly belonged anywhere my entire life. Whether it was schools or houses, I found myself jumping from place to place, never having a place to call home. As a child, my mother and father tossed my brother and I between each other. The only substance stable in their lives were their drugs, the one thing that had a hold on their souls.

When I was 11 years old, my father surprised me by telling me we would hop on a plane to visit my sister in Texas. My excitement was through the roof, I was eager to see my big sister. Everything felt right. We had boarded the plane, anxious to lift off into the sky. My father buckled me in, stood up, and walked towards the exit. As I'm frantically fumbling to escape from the seatbelt's constraint, confused at the situation, he turns and tells me I'm going to see my sister, but it's alright, I would be back. As he stepped off the plane, I could never have predicted that those couple weeks in Houston would become 5–6 years of my life. He left me.

My time with my sister was horrible. There was a significant line of favoritism between her children and me. Of course I understood, they were her kids, but you're not supposed to show any differences when dealing with children. She constantly made me feel bad about myself, and her fiance ended up being abusive, in the worst way. At one point I couldn't take it, and retreated into the foster care system, and ended up with two different families.

The first family was wonderful. Unfortunately, after a while, they had to

move, and I, selfishly, wanted desperately to remain at my school. I was tired of moving, changing. Because of that I was given to a second family, and they were not as kind as the first. They were foster parents just for the money; yes, there are people out there like that. I ran away twice. The first time, I got caught and plopped back where I started. I waited it out a month or two to make my second attempt. They never found me and I've been back in Oakland, CA, ever since.

My life began to secure itself then. I stayed with my godfather, who became my foundation to get me back on my feet. My godfather was that nudge I needed to go back to school, get a job, do the right thing. And that's exactly what I did.

After that, I met my ex-husband and moved out into our own place, even raised 3 stepkids to adulthood. After a hectic, precarious, chaotic childhood, I had found peace in my adulthood. The first couple years of marriage were great, as they always are. I ignored all the red flags that stand out so prominently to me now. He ended up being controlling, abusive, insecure, jealous, and a collective-ness of trouble. Before I knew it, it came to a bitter end.

Somehow, four years later, I found myself gravitating towards him and we ended up remarrying. I had it in my mind that he had changed for the better and the second time around would be different. I was wrong. Three months after our remarriage, he was seeing someone else. Six months into it, we were separated. Then a year after, we had divorced once again.

That's when I met the father of my son. He was someone I knew for a long time, a constant support system. He knew my family, he had been involved in my life for quite some time. We had a complicated relationship, but nothing transpired until I was single. We weren't trying, we didn't plan it, but I had gotten



pregnant. He begged me to have an abortion, but I refused. Since I wanted to keep the baby, he was the one who left. Then I was alone, pregnant, with nowhere to go.

Before I knew it, I was in a state of uncertainty again. Moving from house to house, unaware of where home was, or what it meant. All I wanted was a place to rest my head, to properly take care of my body that was housing a newborn baby. My credit history was shot, due to disagreements with my ex-husband that resulted in unpaid debt to our previous property. As a result of his unwillingness to pay it off, I was given half the blame and no one would rent to me.

During my pregnancy, I got a job

doing security for Facebook's global headquarters in Menlo Park, but still never had a place to call home. People think, "Oh, you have a good paying job, there's no way you're homeless!" They think that people who work 9 to 5 or make decent money can't be homeless. But they don't understand that it could happen to anyone, anywhere, anytime. When 10 o'clock came, I would kind of linger around and when everybody left, I would dip out into a conference room. I slept there, showered there, even ate there, no one found me.

Finally, thanks to Homeless Prenatal Program, I was able to live in a hotel for a while. Even after I was able to have the baby. After a few months there, I applied and interviewed for Clara House, part of Compass Family Services, which was transitional housing. They are designed to assist you with whatever you need, whether it be finding a job, school, parenting, whatever. I was accepted and have been happy with my son there ever since.

They say there's a chemical from your emotions that transfers to them while they're sitting there, growing inside you. I didn't want what I was going through to affect the both of us. People asked me how I was able to smile, keep a brave face throughout the times I had everything, lost everything, then tried to get everything back. My answer is him.

*Shared weekly on Medium, and soon to be published in a book, 'Stories Behind The Fog' is a compendium of 100 stories of people affected by homelessness in San Francisco. The project was triggered by one man's story that will be released next year in the form of a feature-length documentary: [www.moses.movie](http://www.moses.movie).* ■



# SAFE INJECTION SITES IN SAN FRANCISCO A STEP TOWARDS HARM REDUCTION

CHRIS B.

"I've ... We've lost a lot a bunch of good people out here, and a lot has gotten way close to passing away," says Terrence Dallas Stayton, after clearing his tears in his makeshift corner just a few yards from the main entrance to San Francisco City Hall. Dallas, as he prefers to be called, is well known to Glide's harm reduction community outreach volunteers who gave him the usual: a bag full of clean syringes, cleaning pads, disposal boxes, and Narcan, which is used to treat overdoses. For many, the opioid crisis is as obvious as walking down the streets, but for him it is clear enough to make him cry as soon as he begins to share about the proposed safe consumption sites in San Francisco.

"Clean syringes! Condoms! Lubel!" yells Jason, a member of Glide's harm reduction staff, with a few SFPD officers keeping their eyes on the team. "They must have made a sweep, we should move further. People don't like to be seen by the police taking them," explains another member. The syringe exchange program was a new approach that first took place in San Francisco during the early '90s, running into opposition from the federal government. Only after the HIV epidemic had taken many lives, data showed that infected needles were a large part of it. What the outreach volunteers are doing is no reason for alarm by law enforcement or even the community, and the research is clear that these and other harm reduction services do more help to people with addiction and their communities.

Taeko Frost, western director of the Harm Reduction Coalition, describes harm reduction as the concept that a person has to be ready in order to stop using a substance, and that there's a spectrum during recovery, with each person having individual requirements according to their own circumstances.

Frost has been advocating with many others for the opening of safe injection sites, and according to research done in other places that have them (mostly in Europe, though they also located in Vancouver and a few other cities in Canada), it is clear that they do not increase crime nor do they increase drug use. Frost explains that the main opposition for these sites is not rooted in any reality.

"You are creating syringe shooting galleries" is the opinion of those who oppose the sites, but the argument is not based in any truth—and the data clearly shows that they are a path for recovery. She explains that the reason why the resources shouldn't all be placed in drug rehabilitation centers is because not everyone is ready to go to them, and those who are put in them at the wrong time often overdose, and even die, after being "clean" out of those facilities.

Paula Lum is an expert advisor in the City's new task force on safe injection sites, and there seems to be a unanimous agreement in city government for creating the legal structure that would allow these sites. She also explains that the designation of "clean" is part of the stigma.

Lum points out that she is only giving

her opinion and not speaking as a representative of the task force, but she has been working with addiction, overdose, and intravenous drug-related diseases for more than 30 years at SF General Hospital and UCSF. She explains that the word

failed to reduce its use or illegal trade. Just like with homelessness, it creates a self-perpetuating cycle, and both are often linked. Everyone who works in drug abuse and is familiar with the research done agrees that short-term solutions don't work



Dallas, in front of the Asian Art Museum.

"clean" implies that those who are using them are "dirty," and the stigma of drugs is part of the reason why people use them.

"Even the American Medical Association agrees with the need of supervised injecting facilities," she says. "Those in the medical community who oppose safe injection sites are usually convinced to support once they are exposed to the literature that shows it effectiveness." She thinks that those who don't advocate for them do so for usually personal reasons, since their own reputation might be at some kind of risk when the majority of the people don't approve of them them.

However, she thinks it's only ignorance and that people need to be educated about these issues, part of it because drug use carries such a big stigma that creates a cycle related to the shaming culture that "clean" or "dirty" creates. She thinks that they have to be well implemented, but that the community at large would benefit. People complain about dirty syringes and its impact on tourism, and when people lack empathy for individuals struggling with addiction, they usually see an easy solution in policing drug use.

Law enforcement, in fact, sweep out the streets for a night. That's what Kyle Yergensen, a Tenderloin resident and concierge at the Hilton, noticed during the 2016 Super Bowl. The hotel itself does not have the problem of "people shooting drugs on the streets and dirty syringes" even if it is just a block away from Glide's Harm Reduction headquarters. However, Yergensen found that during the Super Bowl, the sweeps made the people move to another street, and they are probably not going away unless solutions come from a deeper level.

"The opioids crisis is not epidemic, it is endemic" says Lum. The criminalization of drug use has not only led to a rise in the prison population, but has also

for reducing drug addiction, just as they don't for homelessness.

"We should've had these places 10 years ago, the measure was considered 10 years ago but they had to wait until so many people died to act on it. Even London Breed changed her mind, and fucking Ed Lee is starting to talk about it in a positive way," says Paul Harkin with a no-nonsense tone in his office at Glide. In 2007, the SF Department of Public Health held a symposium with community and health advocates that ended without conclusion. "If it were for me, I'd put it right here, even if they pass the law only at city level" he says "they are already doing it in our bathrooms, at least they could have some proper care," but explains that law enforcement could seize the building because they don't have the support of the state. In California, Assembly Bill 186 fell two votes short of passing and is waiting for next year to be reconsidered. However, San Francisco might consider going without the state approval, something that has been done with marijuana, same-sex marriage and syringe exchange. However, Harkin says that if the already existing places of harm reduction worked together to open safe-consumption sites, it wouldn't have to wait another year. If that happens, many people will be saved, and the community at large would benefit.

Ending the stigma is a big part of their work, and thinking in it in an abstract way is different from viewing everyone as a human being. One of the outreach workers, John, began to volunteer with the program because from personal experience he knows about being rejected, labeled and dehumanized. "You see all types of people getting help from us" Harkin says. "One day a well-dressed lady in an expensive BMW asked us for supplies." Moreover, his work is to treat everyone with dignity, a thing everyone in the outreach team

does. "When you're in a hard situation and feel that someone sees you as a human being, with compassion and respect, something changes," he says.

Dallas, in front of the City Hall, says that the politics behind that stuff is keeping everyone back. His supplies, as for many others who asked them from the outreach team, are something he uses as part of the education he does with the issue. "Every week... they don't listen to me, but at least 10 get OD. And sometimes we lose one." He has seen heroin addiction since he was at least 10 years old, and has seen many changes done, but not enough. He agrees that safe injection sites would be a good idea, and his "adoptive son," David, a young man who gives a small chuckle when being called that way, and retorts when Dallas says that he lost his sons by saying "and I lost my father" touching his heart with his fist twice, says that he should be a teacher. He thinks that if people had a place where they could be safe, with people who cared for them and treated them with respect, then they could "go watch a movie, watch TV and relax. Not do anything stupid after that."

However, just like Harkin thinks that this is just a good start on how addiction should be handled, Lum says that there is no way to end the issue of substance abuse, and is going to be an ongoing battle, Dallas points his finger at a tall building behind the City Hall and says "if I had a billion dollars, I'd buy that building and put all the homeless folks in there." And the research is solid on what he says. Sam Tsemberis published an American Journal of Public Health article in 2013, stating that people with mental disorders and substance abuse have a "97 percent housing retention rate and reduction of psychiatric symptoms at 12 months" and almost four times more adherence to drug treatment with methadone (51 percent compared to 13 percent) when the housing was combined with health care.

Anita Palepu, a professor at the University of British Columbia, reached a similar conclusion in another study of the Housing First initiative. The people living in homelessness in San Francisco are as diverse as the population who used to be housed, and some of them might turn to drugs out of desperation, being the younger people the most vulnerable, but secure housing has a bigger impact than any type of medical intervention for people without a place to stay safe. Supervised injection facilities are a first step and many homeless people would benefit from them, but the same compassion, or at least concern for anyone going through addiction should be something that the higher-ups in City Hall should also consider while doing housing policies.

There are no "clean" or "dirty" people, according to harm reduction advocates, and they deal with their own struggles and they can see that others have their own, but for people with addiction issues, even the only fact of being treated with respect, despite their circumstances, can be life-changing. ■

# THE MONSTER IN THE MISSION



KENADI SILCOX

In 2013, Maximus Real Estate Partners began to plan for a housing development at 1979 Mission St. to replace the current businesses located there including a Walgreens, a Burger King, the Hwa Lei Market and spaces for the community to sit, rest, meet up with one another and sleep. Although the project was halted for a few years due to a legal battle between the real estate company and land-owners, Maximus seems to be gearing up for a final showdown to move forward with the project many are referring to as the "Monster in the Mission."

The nickname was coined by the Plaza 16 Coalition, a group dedicated to demanding for the abandonment of Maximus's current 345-unit, 10-story project and creating instead what they call "deeply affordable housing" and community-serving businesses in that space instead. "We're calling our plan the 'Marvel in the Mission'" said Andy Blue, a Plaza 16 organizer who has been fighting with the coalition since 2013.

Those who oppose the construction of the Monster on Mission believe it is not only disregarding the homeless crisis in San Francisco, but an attack on the homeless community. There has been a message coinciding with the development of 1979 Mission St. known as "Clean Up The Plaza." On their website, Clean Up The Plaza refers to the BART station plazas on 16th & Mission as 'deplorable' and implies the that the conditions may be in part to the average 250 members of the homeless community who visit the plaza daily.

Blue stated that with the message to "clean up" the Plaza in place, police officers have already moved forward with harassing and arresting more and more people who gather on the plaza. Although they are their own separate entity, Clean Up The Plaza has found support from Maximus Real Estate because the construction of 1979 Mission seems to be an answer to their demands. "They want to get poor people and people of color out of the plaza," said Blue.

The real estate company has promised to include the city minimum of 41 affordable units, or 12 percent, within the construction, with 49 more affordable units to be built off-site but "affordable" is a questionable concept. According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, families of four bringing in \$100,000 a year can be considered

low-income in the Bay Area, which is a far larger income than what those who are currently living in shelters, on the streets or in residential hotels can claim. "I actually live in a residential hotel," said Chantz, a man who spends time at the 16th and Mission plaza, "The rent keeps getting higher and people can't afford to live here."

Despite broad opposition from over 100 organizations and many community members who have teamed up with Plaza 16, Maximus has put in millions of dollars into donations to political campaigns that benefit them as well as Astroturf campaigns, all with the goal of pushing forward with the Monster. In the BART stations they have taken down Plaza 16's Monster in the Mission campaign posters and replaced them with their own "I Am Not A Monster" posters featuring factoids related to the construction, including one fairly ominous message reading "FACT: 48% of all of the crime that happens in the Mission takes place within 4 blocks of 16th & Mission." It seems to be a message that supports heavy policing of the area, which many would say contributes to the criminalization of homelessness.

As the final steps to put an end to the Monster draw closer, Plaza 16 is making some new demands. They are demanding that the San Francisco planning committee meets with Maximus Real Estate to discuss the Monster project locally in the Mission as opposed to at City Hall. They believe this way more community members will be able to attend and have their voices heard. The group has also been successful in dissuading businesses' attention to the project. A few weeks ago what was supposed to be a meeting with the real estate company and potential businesses looking to buy space in the Monster was shut down by Plaza 16 and picketers.

Overall, the coalition would like to see an end to the Monster, a decriminalization of homelessness, and a rejection of market-rate (competitive and expensive) housing, opting for deeply affordable housing instead. "I'd like to see it get easier to get more housing 'cause it's not enough," said Chantz. Plaza 16 holds a continuous letter writing campaign in order to get these goals accomplished and encourages the citizens of San Francisco to bombard the Board of Supervisors and Planning Committee with their concerns in order to stop the Monster in the Mission. ■

# A NOTE ON LYFT AND UBER FROM A SAN FRANCISCO TAXI DRIVER



BEN VALIS

My name is Ben, and I've been a San Francisco Taxi Driver with Veterans Cab since 2004. I love driving a cab in San Francisco. You feel the rhythm and pulse of the city, and as a taxi driver, you interact with the City from the level of the street. You deal with just about everything, from people living precariously in the tenderloin who need a ride, to ferrying fancy folks from places like the Opera and the Getty mansion. I love experiencing the full spectrum of humanity, economically, socially and culturally, that the City has to offer on a nightly basis.

Since the rise of Uber, and later Lyft and other app-based, ride-hailing services, times have been tough for me the last four to five years, economically and in other, more subtle ways. One of the hardest things for me is driving around empty for 45 minutes to an hour, or sometimes upward of 90 minutes, with no passenger, while literally watching dozens of Ubers and Lyfts pick people up left and right. Mentally, it's demoralizing and gets rather exhausting, especially since most of these drivers just stop in the middle of the traffic lanes, adding to the frustration.

As a longtime SF taxi driver, I often think to myself, "Hey, I am a good driver, I know the city and my way around. I am friendly and welcoming. I just want to pick someone up, but nobody wants me." One thing I have heard literally a thousand times is: "Why don't you just switch to Uber?" I heard it from friends, from my parents, other members of my family, and from strangers. In fact, I heard it just yesterday from someone.

It seems some people are starting to realize what a soulless and unprincipled company Uber is due to their support and advisory relationship within the Trump regime. While they claim that they have recently disavowed this relationship, this relationship, from my perspective, is only the tip of the iceberg in regards to what is wrong with Uber and Lyft.

One thing that is true about Uber and Lyft is that from the beginning, in both cases, they have acted in such a way that these companies feel like the rules should not apply to them. Any company that thinks it's above the law is a danger to all people. That is one thing that Uber/Lyft and Trump have in common. The less money you give to people like this, the better for all of us.

A caveat about Lyft — a lot of people are saying, "Let's switch to Lyft, their politics are better." It's great that Lyft has offered to donate a relatively small amount of money to the American Civil Liberties Union; everything helps in the battle. However, they would be a classic example of an entity that "pays lip service to politics." Lyft entered the market with billions in venture capital from folks like KP and Andreessen and waged a price war on an industry that is almost totally minority, immigrant and working class people of color, many of whom were worker owners, one of the few industries in America with this distinction. Literally, it is the billionaires against the working class, playing itself out in the streets. They are bullies pushing around the weak. Does Lyft offer health insurance to its drivers? Do the drivers maintain full-time commercial insurance policies like legitimate taxis, and do the insurers even know they drive for profit? Are the drivers considered employees or pushed into the legally shady world of contract labor? Does Lyft even maintain minimum protections like workers' compensation should their drivers be injured?

I will probably be a legit taxi driver until it is no longer viable because I love it but also because I will never switch to a company that flouted the law and bribed politicians and in the process destroyed the livelihoods of thousands of my co-workers, and changed what once was a career where folks were able to buy homes and raise a family into "the ultimate side hustle." So yeah, delete Uber. And do whatever you need to do to get home safely.

In the Bay Area, I recommend the Flywheel app for legit taxis. Or standing at 18th and Valencia with your arm out, that actually works pretty well for me. ■

*Do you have a story you'd like to tell or one that you'd like us to look into? Reach out to us at [streetsheet@cohssf.org](mailto:streetsheet@cohssf.org) with tips, pitches, and comments about our content.*

# DEFEND DACA



Art: Nicolas Lampert

## FROM SHADOWS

a ballet about homelessness

Choreographed by: Marika Brussel



October 12th and 13th, 2017 at ODC Theater 3153 17th Street, San Francisco, CA

[www.marikabrussel.com](http://www.marikabrussel.com)

These performances of From Shadows are made possible in part by the Fleishhacker Opportunity Fund at ODC  
Photo: Andy Renz Tran

The Street Sheet is honored to be partnering with choreographer Marika Brussel, who will be debuting her play, *From Shadows*, on October 12th and 13th at ODC Theater. *From Shadows* is a contemporary ballet that explores homelessness and addiction. Told through the lens of a young girl looking for her father, this ballet asks us to recognize the humanity in all people, despite their circumstances in life. Tickets can be purchased at [www.marikabrussel.com](http://www.marikabrussel.com). A portion of the proceeds will go towards the Coalition on Homelessness, which publishes the Street Sheet, if the community ticket was purchased.

## WRITER'S CORNER

*"I held an atlas in my lap / Ran my fingers across the whole world / And whispered / Where does it hurt? / It answered / everywhere / everywhere / everywhere." - Warsan Shire, "What They Did Yesterday Afternoon"*

From the destructive hurricanes in Houston, Florida, and Puerto Rico, to Trump's threat to go to war with North Korea, so many of our communities are hurting. Write a poem in which you have the power to heal any place in your community or the world. What would healing look like? What hurt, violence, or fear would you mend or undo, and how?

### HOSTLINE: WHEN THE WOUND HEALS...

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## THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND INSECURITY

GIANNI JONES

Department of Homeland Security under the Trump administration has taken inhumane actions to discontinue the DACA program. Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) initially was memorandum issued in June 2012, under the Obama Administration, by Department of Homeland Security which states "DACA provides certain illegal aliens who entered the United States before the age of sixteen a period of deferred action and eligibility to request employment authorization."

The discontinuance of this program impacts hundreds of thousands children and parents right here in the US. The DACA program provides two to three years of authorization to work in the U.S. and specific travel benefits. During the course of the DACA's program, an expansion to the program included the parents of recipients. Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA) benefits were extended to undocumented immigrant parents with permanent US resident children, as explained in the Department of Homeland Security memorandum. These benefits are helpful in keeping families together and working in the United States. However, Donald Trump rescinded this widely utilized program on September 5, 2017.

In matter of eight months several impeding actions by the government including an executive order, 5th Circuit ruling, and call for implementation of a memorandum sent devastating blows to undocumented immigrants residing in the United States. The 5th Circuit Court of Appeals concluded that DACA did not adhere to Administrative Procedure Act incited by a memorandum released on September 5, 2017. According to the Office of Administrative Law, the Administrative Procedure Act (APA) solidifies a standard of rulemaking procedures for agencies of the federal government to follow. It provides the community a way to actively participate in the implementation of state regulations. So what does that exactly mean for undocumented immigrants in the US?

According to Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs there are several implications to the Trump Administration's decision to end DACA:

- Employment authorization and DACA benefits will remain valid until specified expiration date
- There will be no acceptance of any new DACA applications by USCIS
- Expiring work permits can be renewed by October 5, 2017
- Traveling abroad through Advanced Parole will be revoked

These actions have outraged and frustrated community members, governmental officials, and organizations supporting undocumented immigrants. In fact, on September 6, 2017, Senator Kamala D. Harris, delivered remarks at a press conference to address Trump's discontinuance of DACA. In the press conference, Harris explained the implications of "irresponsible" decision to rescind this program including job loss and pure immortality. Furthermore, Harris embodies the sentiment of many people in communities throughout the United States. People care and want to make a difference in helping those impacted by these changes.

The Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs is working closely with organizations such as Catholic Charities and La Raza to help fund their efforts in assisting undocumented immigrants. Many undocumented immigrants must undergo screenings to verify their eligibility for DACA benefits and pay application fee of \$500 in which fee assistance is available for applicant stated Rich Whipple, Deputy Director at Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs.

Considering the recent action to end DACA, the Office of Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs will continue to advocate for the Dream Act, outreach to community members, and assist immigrants in renewing their status by the final October 5 deadline. Whipple passionately explains that "there is a need for inclusive, compassionate and comprehensive immigration reform." The people known as Dreamers contribute greatly to our society as humans, workers and seekers of equal rights for all. Furthermore, as a nation we should support programs and policies that keep families united. ■

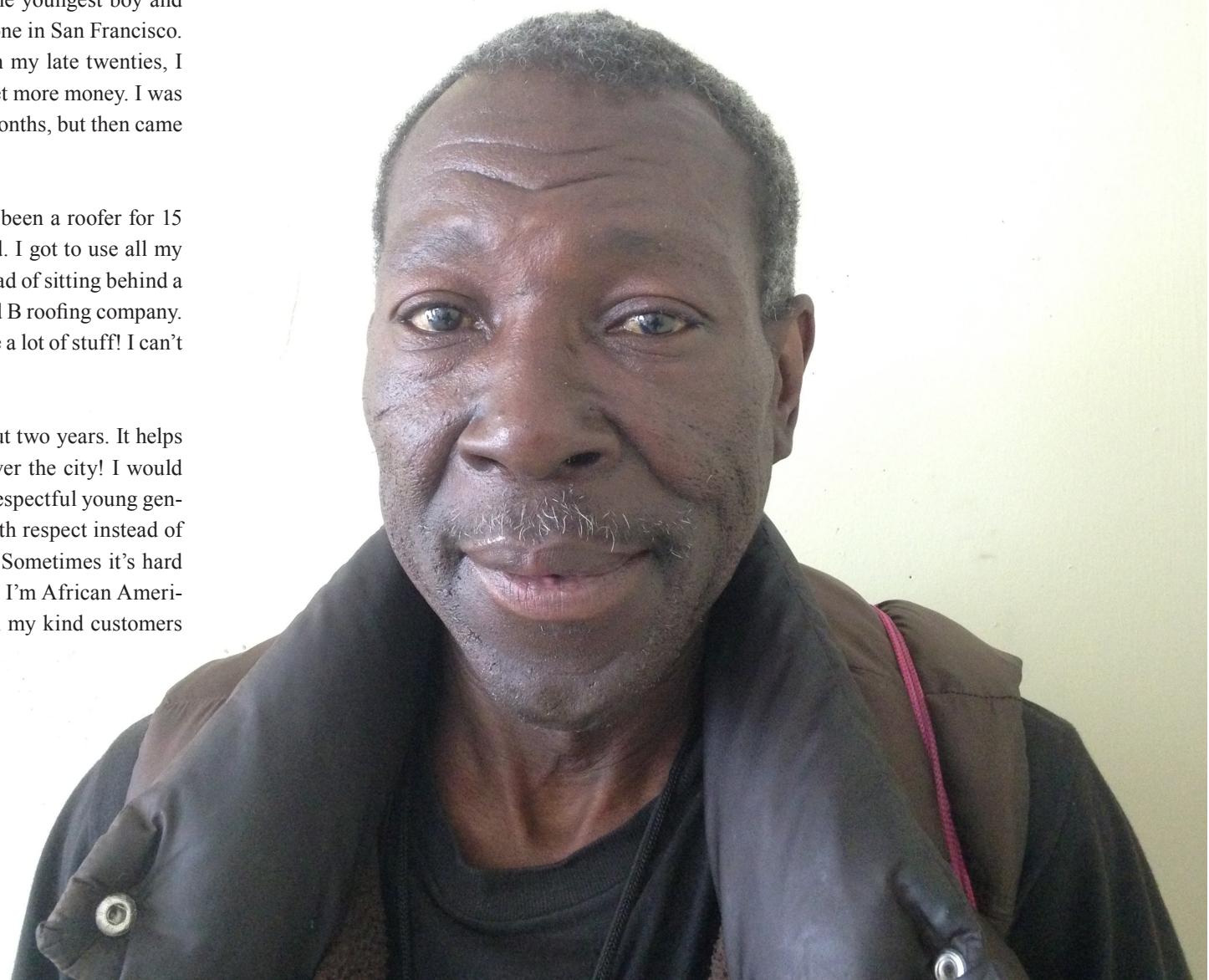
**IF YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE YOUR WRITING  
WITH THE STREET SHEET, YOU CAN E-MAIL  
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SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102.**

## VENDOR PROFILE: PHILLIP NESBITT

I'm from Manchigo Bay, Jamaica. I am the youngest boy and five sisters and two brothers, but I'm the only one in San Francisco. I don't know where they're at now. In 1985 in my late twenties, I came to Los Angeles to see the world and to get more money. I was in Los Angeles and Long Beach for a couple months, but then came to San Francisco.

I'm 55 years old and I have one son. I've been a roofer for 15 years—and I loved it. It was the best job I had. I got to use all my body: My muscles, my brain, everything, instead of sitting behind a computer and getting bored. I worked for A and B roofing company. I was also a cook, landscaper, painter, I've done a lot of stuff! I can't even think of it. Janitor work.

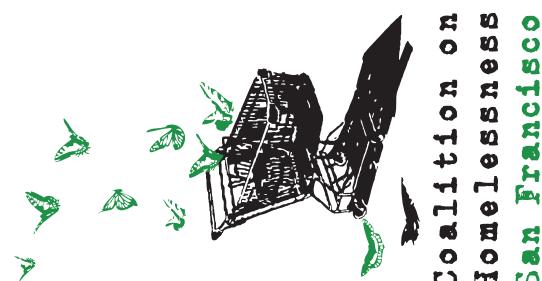
I have been a Street Sheet vendor for about two years. It helps me out; it gives me some income. I sell all over the city! I would want people to know that I'm a very kind and respectful young gentleman, and I would like people to treat me with respect instead of cursing me and calling me all type of names. Sometimes it's hard to sell the paper, and I think especially because I'm African American, until they get to know you. Thanks to all my kind customers that help me out!



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